

the subject of a peculiar arrangement, which makes these offices practically hereditary. In the Mar Shimun family there has been provided for more than three centuries a regular succession of youths called *Nazcurites*, who have never eaten meat or married, and whose mothers ate no meat for many months before they were born. One of these is chosen by the Patriarch as his successor, and then some of the disappointed youths take to eating meat like other men. At the present time, though Mar Araham has been designated, there are one or two boy-relatives of the Patriarch who are being brought up not to eat meat. The same prohibition applies to a bishop. He also usually has one or more *Nazarites*, frequently nephews or cousins, who have been brought up by him not to eat meat, one of whom, if there be more than one, he chooses as his successor. If he neglects to make a choice, the Bishopric at his death falls like a fief to the Patriarch, who has an enormous diocese, while three of the Bishops have only a few villages to look after.

Bishops, priests, and deacons are very poor. Occasionally a church has a field or two as an endowment, or the villagers contribute a small sum annually, or plough the priest's fields, or shear his sheep, but the fees given for baptisms, marriages, and other occasional offices - would be his sole dependence unless he followed some secular calling. In some places there is a plethora of supernumerary priests, and it is shrewdly said that these obtain holy orders from

the Bishops for the sake of the loaves of
sugar paid as
fees. There are great abuses connected with
ordination.

One of the present bishops was consecrated
when quite a
young boy, and deacons are often ordained
at sixteen,
and even much earlier. Mar Auraham must
have been
consecrated before he was twenty. The only
qualification
for ordination is the ability to read old
Syriac. The
gaily-dressed and fully-armed young
mountaineers whom